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PRICE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

MY SON ARTHUR

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY

MARY F. KINGSTON

DICK & FITZGERALD
PUBLISHERS
18 Ann Street, New York

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MY SON ARTHUR

A Comedy in One Act

By MARY F. KINGSTON

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DICK & FITZGERALD
18 ANN STREET

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MY SON ARTHUR

CHARACTERS

ARTHUR ..... *The son*
MRS. APPLEBY ..... *A doting mother*
JANE PERRY ..... *An athletic girl*
EVELYN HAYS ..... *A dance devotee*
SALLY LEWIS ..... *A student*
MARIE OGDEN ..... *Stage struck*
ELSIE JENKINS ..... *With a susceptible heart*
MRS. PRY ..... *The hotel gossip*
JENNIE ..... *The unexpected guest*
HOTEL CLERK

TIME.—The present. LOCALITY.—A country town.
TIME OF PLAYING.—About forty-five minutes.

COSTUMES

JANE wears a tennis suit, and other characters wear appropriate summer dresses.

INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES

A book for SALLY. Tennis racket for JANE. Paper, envelope, fountain pen and glasses for MRS. PRY. Magazine and box of chocolates for ELSIE.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

As seen by a performer on the stage, facing the audience, R. means right-hand, L., left-hand. C. center of stage. D. C., door at center; D. R., door at right. UP, means toward back of stage; DOWN, toward footlights.

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MY SON ARTHUR

SCENE.—*Office of a summer hotel. Morning. Desk with hotel register in prominent place, mail box, post cards, candy boxes, etc. Door at center back leading into the hotel. Door at right leading to porch. A rocker and several chairs placed conveniently about the room. At rise of curtain* SALLY *is* DISCOVERED *absorbed in a book, and the* HOTEL CLERK *is in back of the desk.*

ENTER JANE, D. C., *with tennis racket. Gets mail from clerk.*

JANE (*turns and sees* SALLY). Hello, Sally. What? A book so early in the morning? This isn't college—it's a vacation!

SALLY. I know. That's the reason I'm reading. I don't have any time at college.

JANE. All right, you old bookworm, go ahead. I'll read my mail. (*Opens a letter and reads with great interest*)

SALLY (*looking up and noticing* JANE'S *absorption*). From the interest you give that letter, it must be from Dick.

JANE (*enthusiastically*). It is!

SALLY. Poor Dick.

JANE (*quickly*). Why, what's the matter with him?

SALLY. Nothing yet. I was thinking how awful it would be if Mrs. Appleby's son should cut him out.

JANE (*puzzled*). Mrs. Appleby? Mrs. Appleby? Oh, yes, I know now the one you mean—that woman who was talking to me last night about her wonderful son.

SALLY. Yes.

JANE. Say, I wonder what sort of a "Triple X" paragon "My Son Arthur" is, anyway. According to his mother, there isn't a single thing in the world he doesn't

excel in, and yet—yea verily—we have never before heard his name spoken of. Amen.

SALLY (*reprovingly*). Jane! Don't get sacrilegious! Every time you say a thing like that, the thought track in your brain deepens and makes it easier for you to say such things again.

JANE. That's your old psychology! It makes me sick, anyway. I wouldn't study it for a farm. (*Disgustedly*) The idea of getting ruts in your head every time you think. No, thank you, I'd rather play tennis. (*Makes stroke with racket*)

ENTER EVELYN D. C. *She shows her love of dancing in her walk.*

EVELYN. Whoever saw such a combination—an athlete and a bookworm!

JANE. Sally's teaching my tennis racket the latest style in brain cells. Come on and hear.

EVELYN (*disregarding this remark*). Girls, do either of you know Mrs. Appleby?

JANE. "On with the dance!" What's *your* trouble?

EVELYN. None—far from it—it's good news. Mrs. Appleby's son is coming today and she says he dances wonderfully. I'll be so glad, for there isn't a man here who does. But, do you think she might be *a little bit prejudiced?*

JANE (*shrugging her shoulders*). Such things *have* happened. His mother told me that he has won six thousand and forty tennis tournaments—or something like that. If she weren't his mother, you'd think she was his matrimonial agent.

SALLY. Why Jane, what do you mean?

JANE. Just this. Do you know Mrs. Pry? That funny little woman who can trace everybody's ancestors from the original monkey? Well, she told Mrs. Hart that she believed that Mrs. Appleby was a shrewd business woman and that she was bound that her son should marry money. Of course it may not be so, it makes——(*Stops short as* MRS. APPLEBY *appears at* D. R.)

MRS. APPLEBY. Ah, good morning, girlies. What a

charming picture you make! My son Arthur should be here now. (ENTERS D. R., *goes over to the girls, who receive her politely but without enthusiasm, and sits in rocker. She directs her attention to* JANE, *excluding the other two, who talk in pantomime.*) Tennis again? I am so anxious to have you play with Arthur. He just loves tennis!

JANE. Is that so? (*Strolls over to the hotel register and reads it.* MRS. APPLEBY *turns to* EVELYN. SALLY *reads her book*)

MRS. APPLEBY (*to* EVELYN). I did so enjoy seeing you dance last night. You are the soul of motion, my dear. I can hardly wait to see you dance with my son Arthur. He is——

JANE (*interrupting*). Good-bye people, I'm going down to the courts. (EVELYN *starts after her*) Coming, Evelyn? Excuse us, Mrs. Appleby.

[EXIT JANE *and* EVELYN, D. R.

MRS. APPLEBY (*turning to* SALLY, *who is reading intently*). Aren't they charming girls? Which is your favorite? I can't seem to make up my mind which I like the better.

SALLY (*looking up abstractedly*). Beg pardon. Did you speak to me?

MRS. APPLEBY. Yes. I said the girls were charming.

SALLY (*with enthusiasm*). Indeed they are—they're splendid!

MRS. APPLEBY (*having gotten* SALLY'S *attention*). Rather frivolous, though. *I* prefer a serious girl, one who reads and thinks. So does my son Arthur. I do so hope he will marry a serious girl.

SALLY (*uncomfortably*). Yes?

MRS. APPLEBY (*looking at* SALLY'S *book*). But I am intruding. Go right on with your reading. I wouldn't interrupt such delight.

SALLY. I think if you will excuse me, I'll go get another book.

MRS. APPLEBY. Go right along, my dear. (EXIT SALLY C. D. MRS. APPLEBY *rocks rapidly, drumming on the chair arm*)

ENTER MRS. PRY, D. C. *carrying paper, envelope and fountain pen. Sits in chair vacated by* SALLY.

MRS. PRY (*briskly*). Fine day, Mrs. Appleby.

MRS. APPLEBY. It is, indeed. (*With quick change to earnestness*) Mrs. Pry, who told you that every girl in this house was an heiress? Why, *I* never knew it until yesterday morning!

MRS. PRY. I've known it for years. You see, Mrs. Waterbury is a friend of mine, and she is related to Jane Perry. Her mother's second cousin's husband was an uncle of Mrs. Perry's niece by marriage, so of course she knows all about them.

MRS. APPLEBY. How was that?

MRS. PRY. Mrs. Waterbury's mother's second cousin's husband was an uncle of Mrs. Perry's niece by marriage.

MRS. APPLEBY. You say that Mrs. Waterbury's niece——

MRS. PRY. No, no. Mrs. Waterbury's mother's second——

MRS. APPLEBY (*cutting in*). Oh yes, to be sure. And *that's* the way you know the Perrys are rich?

MRS. PRY. Yes. I know for a fact that Mr. Perry is worth a million. He made it himself, in copper. His parents were farmers—fine people, but no money. Mr. Perry is a born business man. His wife has always had money. She's the daughter of "Old Sawyer"—you know him, "Old Sawyer of Wall Street." Fine old man, they said, but a perfect wizard at making money. He must have inherited it, for they say he is a direct descendant of Croesus—and you know who Croesus was!

MRS. APPLEBY. Oh yes—but Jane? Is she——

MRS. PRY. No. You'd never know from Jane that they had a cent. She cares more for tennis than for dollars.

MRS. APPLEBY. And are the others just as rich?

MRS. PRY. Mrs. Waterbury says they are, and as she's a relative of the Perrys', she ought to know.

MRS. APPLEBY (*almost smacking her lips*). Ummm! All rich! Ummm!

ENTER MARIE D. C. *She goes to desk, buys candy, and gets mail.*

MRS. PRY (*nodding toward* MARIE). Now there's Marie Ogden. She's another who isn't satisfied with money alone. She wants a career. Wants to go on the stage, but her mother won't let her.

MRS. APPLEBY. Is her mother a puritan?

MRS. PRY. Oh dear, no. It isn't that—only she thinks it is absolute foolishness to work if one isn't forced to do it. Between you and me, the Ogdens would never have had their money if it had been left to Mrs. Ogden to make it. She was one of the Joneses from Dover and her people never had a cent. Why, her brother is so shiftless that he wouldn't walk if he could get somebody to carry him. Mrs. Waterbury says that all Mrs. Ogden's relations are like that. Why one of her nieces had a husband whose brother's wife's sister was a perfect lazybones, so you can see that it runs in the family. But don't tell anybody I said that, for I wouldn't want anyone to think that I was *criticising!* Well, I must go finish a letter to my husband. I feel that it is my duty to write to him once in a while when he is down in the hot city all alone. (EXIT MRS. PRY D. R. MARIE *leaves the desk and tries to avoid* MRS. APPLEBY)

MRS. APPLEBY. My dear, are you in too much of a hurry to talk to a lonely old woman for a minute.

MARIE. Of course not.

MRS. APPLEBY. I've been hearing great things about your dramatic talent. (*Pinches* MARIE'S *cheek playfully*) I never dreamed we had an actress in our midst.

MARIE. Oh, I'm not a real actress—I only wish I were. I think it must be the most wonderful thing in the world.

MRS. APPLEBY. But why don't you go on the stage?

MARIE. My mother won't let me.

MRS. APPLEBY. Then why not marry? Now if you would only marry a man like my son Arthur, you could have your career and a devoted husband, as well. Arthur just dotes on the stage. (MARIE *is nonplussed at this extravagance and is about to protest*)

ENTER MRS. PRY D. R. *with letter, which she mails.*

MARIE. Excuse me. [EXIT D. C.

MRS. PRY. Well, that letter is written and my conscience is clear for another week. The worst part of leaving your husband for the summer, is writing letters to him.

MRS. APPLEBY. Yes, I find it convenient to be a widow.

ENTER ELSIE D. R., *with a magazine and a box of chocolates. She sits in a comfortable chair and begins to eat and read.*

MRS. APPLEBY. Who is *that* girl?

MRS. PRY. That's Elsie Jenkins. She's a nice little thing but without an overabundance of brains. Good hearted, though, and so trusting it's funny. She takes it honestly enough. Her mother was just the same, they say. She married ever so young and died when Elsie was a little baby. They say she was just like Elsie is. Her father was a minister. They say that he was related to our pastor. I think his wife was our pastor's wife's uncle's cousin. I'm not quite sure, but I think that is the way it was. Elsie comes from a fine family, and she is so good hearted. Her only drawback is that she stutters.

MRS. APPLEBY. I think I'd like to meet her. Have they lots of money?

MRS. PRY. More than they can spend. They say that Mr. Jenkins lies awake nights, wondering how to use it.

MRS. APPLEBY. Call her over and introduce us, won't you?

MRS. PRY. Elsie, come here a moment. I want to present you to Mrs. Appleby. (*They exchange courtesies.* MRS PRY *picks up* ELSIE'S *magazine*)

MRS. APPLEBY (*to* ELSIE). My dear child, this hotel is wonderful. Each girl I meet is lovelier than the last. I can't wait until my son Arthur comes.

ELSIE (*stuttering*). Your s-s-s-son? W-w-when is he coming?

MRS. APPLEBY. Very soon, now.

ELSIE. How p-p-perfectly l-lovely. W-what is he like?

MRS. APPLEBY (*with feigned modesty*). How can I say. Love's spectacles magnify.

ELSIE. How b-b-beautifully you talk. (*Sadly*) But maybe he won't notice me.

MRS. APPLEBY. Oh yes he will. Leave that to me. You can't tell, it might be a case of love at first sight.

ELSIE (*in raptures*). Oh, I sh-sh-should p-perfectly l-love it.

MRS. APPLEBY. You dear enthusiastic child! Arthur loves enthusiasm. Maybe you two were made for each other.

ELSIE. H-how w-w-wonderful! P-p-papa would be so p-pleased.

MRS. APPLEBY. Yes?

ELSIE. You see, m-my mother is d-dead and I am the only ch-child, and our house is so dull. N-nothing in it but s-servants. And p-papa is so anxious to have me get married.

MRS. APPLEBY (*with suppressed excitement*). Servants? Ummm! Er—how many have you, dear?

ELSIE. I-I-I don't kn-know. I n-never counted them. But I know one th-th-thing, when I g-get a home of my own, I w-wont have one! I'll sc-sc-scrub and sw-sw-sweep, and everything.

MRS. APPLEBY. Oh, my dear, no. That would be foolish. Just think of the people who would love to have servants.

ELSIE. They w-wouldn't if they loved h-housework and never had a chance to d-do any.

MRS. APPLEBY. You funny child. Why don't you get married and do as you like?

ELSIE. G-g-getting married w-wouldn't help any, for I'd have to l-live home with pa-papa and all those s-s-servants, for p-papa will take my h-husband into the bu-business with him.

MRS. APPLEBY (*admonishingly*). My darling child! Don't tell that to *everybody*, for some mothers would try to make a match between you and their sons. You may tell me, for it is all right. Do you know, you are just exactly the kind of a girl I would like to see my son Arthur marry.

ELSIE. Am I, r-r-really? How p-perfectly d-d-divine!

MRS. PRY (*looking up from the magazine and interrupting*). Well, I think I'll go down to the tennis courts and watch them play. Do you care to come, Mrs. Appleby?

MRS. APPLEBY. Thank you, I think I will. (*To* ELSIE) Good-bye, my dear. Be sure you are around so that I may present Arthur to you. (EXIT MRS. PRY *and* MRS. APPLEBY D. R. ELSIE *sighs happily, takes a large chocolate and opens her magazine*)

ENTER JANE *and* EVELYN D. C.

JANE (*looking around*). I wonder where *Cupid* has gone? My, how I don't like that woman! She's too ikky sweet.

EVELYN (*charitably*). That's just her manner, I think.

JANE. Then it's her manner that I don't like. I feel sure I'd never care for her as a mother-in-law.

EVELYN (*quickly*). What do you mean?

JANE. She has kindly invited me to throw myself at the head of "*My Son Arthur*," that's all. Of course I've never seen her little boy so I have nothing against him. Just the same, I'm not going to have him, or anybody else, thrust at me by some matchmaker.

EVELYN. I can't imagine what you mean.

JANE. Well, at first she literally made me promise to play tennis with him. That isn't so bad, for he'd have to stay on the other side of the net, anyway—but when Mrs. Appleby tells me how anxious she is to have her son marry a tennis playing mate, I feel that it is time to look out.

EVELYN (*getting interested*). What did she say to you?

JANE. Oh, a lot of stuff—mainly that her dear son loved tennis so well that he would be sure to love me for loving it. I don't remember all she said, for that was the order of it.

EVELYN. How funny! Why she said almost the same thing to me only it was about dancing instead of tennis.

JANE. She did? Great Scott, let's look at the register. Perhaps they're *Mormons!* (*They dash over to the register.* ELSIE *looks up from her magazine. They turn and catch her eye*)

JANE. Do you know where Sally is, Elsie?

ELSIE. Out on the p-p-porch. I'll t-tell her you want her. [EXIT ELSIE D. R.

ENTER SALLY D. R.

SALLY. Elsie says you want me.

JANE. I do. Sally, do you want to marry Mrs. Appleby's son?

SALLY. Don't talk foolishness, Jane. I thought you wanted me for *something*.

JANE. This is certainly something—and something serious. Do you want to marry *"My Son Arthur?"*

SALLY. Of course I don't—and you know it.

JANE. Then join the union, or you may get caught. I'm going to do all I can to save my friends from a plain, unvarnished conspiracy.

SALLY (*sedately*). Jane, you sound like a trashy novel.

JANE. Just the same I'm deadly in earnest. I have reason to believe that Mrs. Appleby is here to marry one of us to this son of hers. Now, I have decided to form a "Society for the Prevention of Undesirable Matrimony," and you've got to join. Listen. Has Mrs. Appleby ever said anything to you about how much she would like it if her son Arthur should fall in love with a girl who was always reading?

SALLY. Yes, she did say something like that.

EVELYN (*looking at* JANE). What do you think of that?

JANE (*with decision*). Now I'm sure. We'd better settle this thing right away. I'll go get the other girls. You wait here. [EXIT JANE D. R.

EVELYN. Isn't Jane a dear? She's lots more worried over us than she is herself.

SALLY. Yes—it seems as if she were always looking after us.

ENTER JANE, ELSIE *and* MARIE D. R.

JANE (*to* ELSIE *and* MARIE). Will you girls answer any question I ask?

ELSIE. Oh, I've pl-pl-played this g-g-game before. I th-th-thought you were going to t-talk about s-s-something r-real.

EVELYN (*impressively*). Don't worry—it's real enough.

JANE (*to* ELSIE). Elsie, has Mrs. Appleby ever told you that you would make a perfect wife for her son Arthur?

ELSIE. I'm n-not g-g-going to tell you, Jane P-P-Perry. It was all c-c-c-confidential.

JANE (*to* MARIE). Marie, does this sound familiar? (*Imitating* MRS. APPLEBY) "My dear, if you would *only* marry my son Arthur, you could go on with your career and become a wonderful actress. You should marry him, my dear."

MARIE (*almost out of sorts*). Where were you?

JANE (*pretending not to understand*). Where was I? When?

MARIE. When Mrs. Appleby said those things to me! (*Laughing*) But what difference does it make, I'd have told you anyway. Yes, it does sound very familiar.

JANE. Now listen to me, girls, if you don't want to get caught by a regular matrimonial agent of a mother, *avoid Mrs. Appleby!*

ELSIE. J-J-Jane, that is the first c-c-catty thing I ever heard you say. Mrs. Appleby is l-l-lovely, and I won't have her insulted even b-by my b-b-best friends, so there!

JANE. All right, Elsie—you don't have to join the union. All we ask is that you will listen to our meeting, and keep it a secret. But you *must* listen. This morning, Mrs. Appleby kept harping on how her son loved tennis, and how she hoped that he would marry a tennis player, and all that sort of thing. From what you girls have admitted I find that she has said practically the same thing to you, only with the words dancing, books, home-life, theatre, as the case might be.

ELSIE (*almost tearfully*). It d-doesn't seem p-p-possible!

JANE. What shall we do with the audience? It is talking back!

SALLY. If I were you, I'd listen to her story if she will tell it.

ELSIE. T-t-tell it? I'm b-b-bursting! That five-faced woman! And I've m-made an appointment to m-m-meet her old son!

SALLY (*gently*). Don't feel badly, dear. She almost hood-winked us all.

EVELYN. Not *all*—Jane was awake.

JANE. But now the question is, what are we going to do?

SALLY. What *can* we do?

EVELYN (*hopelessly*). I haven't an idea.

MARIE (*dramatically*). Let's kill the villain with dirks!

ELSIE. L-l-let's all g-g-go home.

JANE. No, let's all make him propose, and we'll all accept him. He can't marry us all, and just see the pickle he will be in.

ELSIE (*whose heart is soft*). I w-wonder if h-he's handsome?

JANE. Never mind if he is. Don't you *dare* like him! Remember, when you are pleasant to him you will only be acting a part, and if you dare get serious, we'll all disown you for a friend. Oh, I see chaos ahead!

ELSIE. P-p-perhaps he will be ugly, and then it w-won't be h-hard.

JANE. Now look here, Elsie, if there's going to be any danger, we'll lock you in your room.

SALLY (*gently*). You stay with me, Elsie. I won't let you fall in love, really.

ENTER MRS. APPLEBY D. C.

MRS. APPLEBY. Ah, here you are—all together. How glad I am, for my son is coming any minute and you will all be here to meet him. Isn't that charming? (*To* ELSIE, *aside*) Of course, I am anxious to have Arthur meet all of your friends, but I am sure he will like you best.

SALLY (*seeing trouble ahead*). Elsie—pardon me, Mrs. Appleby—did you find the handkerchief I put on your bureau?

ELSIE (*not understanding*). Wh-wh-what handkerchief?

SALLY. One I borrowed. (*Shakes her head warningly at* ELSIE)

MRS. APPLEBY. I believe they are coming. (*Hurries over to* D. R. *The girls preen themselves*)

ENTER D. R. ARTHUR, *a sad imitation of a man, a weakling and a sissy—but girlishly pretty.* MRS. APPLEBY *rushes up to him and throws her arms around his neck. The girls are in a state of silent excitement.* JANE *wants to laugh;* ELSIE *to cry; and* MARIE *to faint. They do some pantomime work.*

ARTHUR. Hullo, mamma! (*Goes to desk and registers*)

MRS. APPLEBY (*to* ARTHUR). I am so glad you have come. I have never seen so many lovely girls—lovely and *rich!!*

ARTHUR (*absently*). Y' don't say so.

MRS. APPLEBY (*with suppressed excitement*). And every one an heiress, so you can take your pick.

ARTHUR (*uninterestedly*). That so! I'll go to my room now, *mamma.*

MRS. APPLEBY. No, wait. Miss Jenkins! (ELSIE *leaves the group of girls and goes over*) I want to present *My Son Arthur.* Excuse me, and I'll go get the other girls. (*She leaves them alone*)

ELSIE (*waiting for him to speak*). H-h-have you ever b-b-been here b-b-before?

ARTHUR (*with embarrassment*). No, that is, yes, er,—I beg your pardon, what was it you said?

ELSIE. I asked you i-if you h-h-had ever been h-here before. It's a lovely place. Don't you like it?

ARTHUR. No, that is, er, yes. I think I'll go to my room now. (*Turns to go out but is confronted with his mother and* SALLY)

MRS. APPLEBY (*gushingly*). And now, Arthur dear, I want to present you to Miss Lewis—a wonderful student.

ARTHUR. How do you do, Miss Lewis. I am going to my room now, *mamma!*

MRS. APPLEBY (*dolefully*). But the others will be *so* disappointed. Why, they've been waiting around all the morning to meet you. Come, dear, and I'll present you. (*They go over to the group and* ARTHUR *is presented in pantomime*)

ELSIE (*to* SALLY). I-Isn't he rather——*odd?*

ARTHUR (*to group*). Glad to know you. I'll go to my room now, mamma. (*Hurried* EXIT *at* D. C., *followed by* MRS. APPLEBY. *The girls look at each other aghast*)

JANE. Cordial sample, isn't he?

ELSIE. Maybe it's bec-c-cause he's b-b-bashful. I think he h-h-has a lovely f-f-face.

ALL. *Elsie!!!*

ELSIE. I-I-I'm sorry for h-him.

JANE (*getting alarmed*). Now, Elsie, you can't like him—even if you should want to. Remember how lonely you would be at college if we all stopped being your friends.

ELSIE. Oh, of c-c-course I'll do my p-part, but I f-feel like an awful s-sneak.

JANE. Well, you needn't—for you are just acting a part. We'll all help you. (*Turning to group*) Imagine his playing tennis! I believe I could beat him with my arms tied behind me. Come on, let's go get some air.

[EXIT SALLY, D. C., *other* GIRLS D. R.

ENTER D. R. MRS. PRY, *who seeks the register.*

MRS. PRY (*adjusting her glasses and reading*). Arthur Claude Appleby! Ugh, writes like a knock-kneed jelly fish!! (*She looks up*)

ENTER ARTHUR *and* SALLY D. C.

SALLY (*talking rapidly*). I am so glad you like psychology. Your mother told me how interested you were in the subject, and it is so hard to get anybody here to talk about it.

ARTHUR (*stupidly*). Ah——ah——yes.

SALLY. Do you believe that hypnotism is a scientific benefit or a pernicious practise?

ARTHUR (*in a maze*). Yes, I do.

SALLY. You do what?

ARTHUR (*hopelessly*). What you said.

SALLY. I'm so glad. It is certainly difficult to get an opinion like that from most people.

ENTER MARIE D. R.

MARIE. Oh, Mr. Appleby, your mother has told me how fond you are of the theatre, and I wanted to ask you which you thought the better actress, Sarah Bernhardt or Eva Tanguay?

ARTHUR. Ah, that is, er, I really don't know. I never saw either of them.

ENTER *other* GIRLS D. R. *They form a group around* ARTHUR, *and talk in pantomime.* ENTER MRS. APPLEBY, D. C.

MRS. APPLEBY (*rushing up*). Ah, there you are. Come, young folks, they are just going to start a baseball game. Don't you want to come out and see it?

ALL (*except* ARTHUR). Oh, yes. [EXIT ALL D. R.

RE-ENTER ARTHUR D. R., *followed closely by* ELSIE. ARTHUR *turns and looks around for a place of escape.*

ELSIE (*with reproach*). W-w-why did you r-run away?

ARTHUR (*petulantly*). I don't want to see their old game.

ELSIE. But y-you w-w-wouldn't spoil everything, would you?

ARTHUR. No. Go ahead and watch—you don't have to stay here.

ELSIE. After w-w-waiting all d-day for you to c-c-come!

ENTER EVELYN D. R.

EVELYN. I wondered what had become of you, Mr. Appleby, for I thought if you did not care for the ball game, you might come out on the porch and teach me the dances that have come out since I have been up here. You don't mind, do you Elsie? (*Puts her arm through Arthur's and they* EXIT D. R. ELSIE *looks after them regretfully*)

ENTER Mrs. Appleby d. r.

Mrs. Appleby. What, my dear, sitting here all alone? Where's Arthur?

Elsie. H-he's j-j-just gone out on the p-p-porch.

Mrs. Appleby. I'm afraid Arthur is not well today. You wait until you see him at his best. Do you know, I believe that he does like you best of all!

Elsie. R-r-really? But I d-don't dare l-like him. If I d-did, my fr-fr-friends——

Mrs. Appleby (*interrupting*). I know, but he can't marry them all, so it is all right for me to be glad that you are the one. I am sure it is a love match. (Elsie *plainly in raptures*)

ENTER d. r. Jane *who suspects what is going on.*

Jane. Elsie, we've been looking all over for you. You're missing the whole game. (EXIT Jane *and* Elsie d. r. Mrs. Appleby *nods her head in emphatic approval at* Elsie's *departing figure*)

ENTER Arthur d. r. *He appears much dejected.*

Mrs. Appleby. Having a good time, darling?

Arthur. No.

Mrs. Appleby. *What?*

Arthur (*correcting himself*). No, *mamma!*

Mrs. Appleby. What's the matter? Can't you decide which one of the girls you like best?

Arthur. I don't like any of them, mamma.

Mrs. Appleby (*severely*). You *don't?* What do you think I spent all that money to bring you up here, for? You've *got* to like one of them. Haven't I told you that they are all *rich?*

ENTER Jane d. r.

Jane. Oh, Mr. Appleby, we're going to have a game of charades now that the ball game is over. Our side is going

to give the word decipher and we want you to represent the cipher. (ARTHUR *tries to protest, but she drags him off*)

[EXIT JANE *and* ARTHUR D. C., *followed by* MRS. APPLEBY.

ENTER SALLY D. R. *She drops into a chair and is soon lost in her book. Then* ENTER ELSIE D. R. *Looks around in a guilty fashion. She startles the usually placid Sally.*

SALLY (*jumping*). Goodness, how you scared me. I believe this intrigue is making me nervous.

ELSIE. I-I'm not g-g-going to do it any m-more—for really, I th-think Mr. Appleby is q-q-quite nice.

SALLY. Suppose he is? You dear, silly girl, I believe you've begun to romance. You'd better not let Jane know it.

ELSIE. I-I-I don't like the w-w-way Jane is acting, anyway. Honest, Sally, d-d-don't you think he has l-lovely eyes?

ENTER *other* GIRLS D. R.

JANE. Where's Arthur? I've lost him again.

ELSIE. I th-th-think he's gone out, and I don't b-b-blame him.

JANE. But we've just begun.

ELSIE. I-I've st-st-stopped. I like Mr. Appleby, so there. (EXIT ELSIE D. C. *hastily. The girls look at each other*)

SALLY. Don't you think we'd better stop? I'm afraid we are making Elsie feel that Mr. Appleby needs a champion.

JANE. For goodness' sake, who would have ever expected this? I can't understand Elsie!

SALLY. That's because you have never been starved by loneliness. You leave Elsie to me. And if I were you, I wouldn't say any more about our intrigue to her.

JANE. We're going on with it just the same. I'm not going to let that woman get the best of Brandford College!

EVELYN. Of course, we will stand by you, Jane.

ENTER Mrs. Appleby d. c.

Mrs. Appleby. My dear girls! It looks as though you were planning some delightful scheme. Won't you tell me, too? I wish Arthur were here to listen to it, but I think (*Meaningly*) that he has gone off to decide a big question. Mrs. Pry said he went over to the railroad station, but he may be back any minute. Come now, tell me what you were plotting. (*Turning*) Oh, here's Arthur, now.

ENTER Arthur d. r.

Jane (*aside to* Marie). See how guilty he looks. Perhaps he has decided to accept one of us, after all.

Marie. Shhh! Listen!!

Mrs. Appleby. Well, Arthur, have you made up your mind?

Arthur. What about, mamma?

Mrs. Appleby (*in an undertone*). About getting married.

Arthur (*uneasily*). Yes, mamma.

Mrs. Appleby (*looks around the group appraisingly and beckons* Elsie *to her side*). Girls, Arthur is going to tell us something so interesting that I want to share it with you. Go on, Arthur.

Arthur. I have decided that as long as you were so anxious to have me get married, I'd better do it.

Mrs. Appleby (*gushingly*). My dear boy!

Arthur. You don't know how hard it was for me to choose, but as long as you are always keeping at me to get married, I have chosen the girl I like best. (*Beckons toward* d. r.) I hope you will be pleased, mamma. (ENTER Jennie, the Unexpected Guest, d. r.) This is Jennie. She used to work in the Bee Hive Store, but I married her yesterday. Go kiss mamma, Jennie. (Jennie *starts toward* Mrs. Appleby. Mrs. Appleby *stares at her, speechless. The girls are amazed.*)

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